Sprint Retrospective

Emmanuela Filev-Mihalak

Southern New Hampshire University

Our team has spent the past several weeks working on a project with the SNHU Travel Agency. The deliverable will consist of a booking website for customers to easily access and be drawn to with desirable vacation packages. The team consisted of the product owner, client, developer, tester, and myself, the Scrum master. I will discuss the contributions that each member of the team made to this project, how an agile approach is helping us with this project, our communication throughout the last sprint, and different agile principles that helped guide the way for our team.

As mentioned, our team consisted of 5 different people including myself. The product owner is in charge of communicating the requirements of the project through user stories, as well as discussing the product with stakeholders. The client is the individual associated with SNHU Travel and who approached us initially about this project. The client is in charge of communicating any changes the company may want our team to make. The developer is responsible for creating the product, in this case the website, for the customer. The tester takes the user stories and makes test cases out of them. It is important that the test cases stay consistent with both user stories and the code being developed.

Different roles does not mean that each department stays separate. In fact, there is quite a bit of collaboration that goes into an agile-based project. The tester, developer, and product owner had to stay in constant communication throughout this sprint. Later on in production, the developer reached out to both the product owner and tester and requested that users and the main client are interviewed once for each sprint to ask if they have any more thoughts on potential changes. The product owner was in charge of interviews and updating the developer and tester if there were any changes necessary. The tester had to then update the test cases accordingly, and the developer updated the code based on feedback from both collaborators. Each member involved in this part of the project had to play their part in order for everything to run smoothly.

That example being said, it also helps explain why a Scrum-agile approach can be so beneficial. In times of sudden changes, we can more easily adapt to meet everyone’s needs with the use of agile methodology. The incident that preceded this developer’s response is when the product owner came to the team with a sudden change from the client, requiring that a significant portion of the website is updated to meet these changes. This was an interruption that almost derailed the sprint and caused it to change direction, even if only temporary. It most certainly would have caused a bigger issue in the project as a whole if we followed a waterfall approach versus an agile approach. The change was difficult, but more easily adaptable since we had the necessary tools to do so. The developer’s decision to reach out to the product owner and tester was also an example of a change that needed to be adapted to in an agile-based way.

User stories were a major part of this sprint. Using Scrum-agile methods helped complete this task from start to finish. The product owner began by conducting the basic interviews with each user, followed by creating the stories and then organizing them. Organization was done by adopting a form of the MoSCoW prioritization system. In this system, the largest priority user stories go in the “must have” compartment, medium-sized stories in the “should have” compartment, and lower-sized stories are divided between the “could have” and “won’t have” compartments. The MoSCoW method, a popular Scrum-agile system, was an essential asset in helping other team members understand the importance of each user story.

As stated before, communication is an essential part of a Scrum-agile project, and especially this one. Our project consists of a very small team along with a short timeframe to complete the project, so updates on each other’s progress is not only valued, but necessary. As the Scrum master, I believe my most essential role is Scrum events, which help facilitate that communication between myself and the team. My organization of each Scrum event revolved around that very goal. In Daily Scrums, oftentimes team members would discuss challenges that they were facing in their work, such as a developer struggling with code. It was also in these same meetings that another member would reach out and offer help. Moments of collaboration such as these are great examples of the communication that Scrum events have encouraged, and helped with progression of the project in some unexpected ways.

Scrum events also help with organization of the project. Sprints themselves are a Scrum event, and our conduction of the project revolves around meeting the deadlines of each sprint. By completing a certain amount of work within each two to four week timeframe, we create a type of schedule without sticking to any hard-set plan made in advance.

For the SNHU Travel project, Scrum-agile is certainly the best approach to take. A team with a less-than-average number of members combined with an urgent deadline means that there may be sudden changes to make, and team members must remain flexible to these potential changes. In this sprint, there were multiple changes and interruptions that required our flexibility to come into practice, and fortunately our team was able to meet these needs. One con of a Scrum-agile approach in this case is that some people may focus better under pressure of a deadline if they have a pre-written plan. One of our developers expressed concern over being able to change the course of their progress in creating code, and it seems they would have felt more ready to take on the challenge if the project did not allow for any sudden changes. The reality, however, is that this can happen in any project, even one planned in advance, so taking the approach we did from the beginning was still more beneficial than the waterfall approach.

Scrum-agile is a useful and modern way of handling projects. As the Scrum master, I felt much more equipped to communicate with my team using Scrum-agile tools, and the project felt more organized despite the lack of scheduling and planning that goes into agile. As we approach the next sprint, I am looking forward to learning from the last one and improving our work methods even more.